

Serial No. 09/896,589

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 20 and 38 without prejudice.

Please amend the following claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for making a neutralized aldehyde of lessened toxicity comprising the steps of:

~~{e)}~~ (a) providing an α -hydrogen-free aldehyde ; and

~~{d)}~~ (b) contacting the aldehyde with an effective amount of a base to render the treated aldehyde as neutralized and less toxic compared with the untreated aldehyde and wherein the treated aldehyde is non-hazardous and has a LC₅₀ greater than 500mg/L.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7, wherein the molar ratio of sodium hydroxide to the α -hydrogen-free aldehyde of o-phthalaldehyde is at least about 2.4:1.

21. (Currently Amended) A system for neutralizing an α -hydrogen-free aldehyde and making the aldehydes less toxic comprising:

a container;

a source of α -hydrogen-free aldehyde selected from the group consisting of o-phthalaldehyde, formaldehyde and mixtures thereof directed to the container; and

a source of a base directed to the container to yield treated aldehydes of lower toxicity than the untreated aldehydes and wherein the sources added to the container are controlled to achieve a non-hazardous aldehyde having a LC₅₀ greater than 500mg/L.